



# Memo

To: Board of Selectmen

From: John Scruton

Re: History of studies and analysis of renovation or replacement of former Town Hall

Date: July 6, 2015

The brick façade on cinder block school building was built in 1938 with the bottom floor of the westerly portion added in 1954, the second story added in 1965. Most of the years it served as a school. More recently it has been used for Town Offices, SAU Office, and program space for Recreation. In 1989 there was a floor loading study done by Underwood Engineers\* to study various uses that could occur on the second floor, including limitations on loading. In 2005 the School transferred the site to the Town, retaining the use of the second floor for the SAU with an anticipation of leaving before 2015. The Recreation Department was also using a portion of the building for their Discovery Program for preschool students.

Over the years there were flooding events, in part because of weather conditions and in part poor drainage patterns around the building. In 2006 there was a Team Design space needs study and design of the need to improve the space utilization and make the building compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The 2006 CIP presentation by the Town Administrator to the Planning Board included \$1.5 million for a number of improvements for the town hall including ADA compliance, HVAC, and others. An unhealthy workplace and energy efficiency were cited as part of the justification. At the time of the presentation she was still awaiting the results of the Team Design study. It was stated in the CIP report that population growth would result in the need to add personnel, the space for them and the additional records that would be generated. The CIP for 2008-2020 contained a request for \$3,000,000 for the Town Hall within 6 years for Town Hall replacement/renovation, building needs, ADA, energy efficiency, mold remediation, general reconstruction or replacement. There was a thorough study done by HL Turner\* which recommended \$3,740,000 for improvements to the building. The Board presented this bond request at the March 2011 Town Meeting. It was defeated 570-905 (885 yes were needed).

After rejection by town voters in 2011, the Board made a decision to move out of the building based upon the recommendations of experts. Below is a summary of reports from 2011 dealing with occupancy and mold:

March 22, 2011 Code Enforcement Office Ted Buczek in response to goals for the year wrote "My comment is that on the directive from several professional groups (Desmarais Environmental; Lawson Group; Town's attorney; Workers Comp. etc.) we should vacate the present office complex. This should be the first item on the agenda for goals.

March 28, 2011 Ray Desmarais of Desmarais Environmental, Inc. wrote "The waterproofing and drainage work should have helped mitigate some, but if any staff is still getting ill from being in the building, which I assume they are, should be ample evidence that the problem persists."

April 8, 2011 H.L. Turner Group\* wrote, "With respect to the fitness of the building for occupancy and because we understand that some occupants have reported symptoms of ill health that may be associated with the indoor environment of the facility, we can suggest that if the facility has not been successfully mitigated it is unlikely that the occupant reported symptoms will improve or disappear. As long as the occupants are exposed to microbial agents including possible exposure to mycotoxins, the building would not be considered to be safe for occupancy."

April 29, 2011 Richard Lent of the Lawson Group wrote\*

Several rounds of airborne mold spore testing within the building conducted in the fall of 2010 generally yielded the same results. High spore count levels within building wall cavities and relatively low or "normal" levels within occupied areas of the building. In most cases, building occupants should not experience adverse health effects based on these types of sampling results. However, as related to *SLGL*, a significant percentage of building occupants have experienced health effects that they relate to time spent in the building. Recently *SLGL* has also been informed that these complaints are persisting and may have increased in number. It may be that building occupants are being adversely affected by the wall cavity contamination in some way not measurable by the current testing that has been done. In fact, current industry mold testing methods may not be able to show conclusively how or if the wall cavity contamination may be affecting building occupants, such as through mold mycotoxin exposure.

As stated in our letter of January, and in other correspondence since, *SLGL* agrees with the opinion of others that the overall "ideal" solution or option to eliminate building occupant complaints is to move the offices to another location. We have previously indicated that another possible "option" for the town to consider would be remaining in place, while implementing a comprehensive remediation plan. However, by remaining in the building, and especially considering that there are no current plans for remediation, the town will incur certain risks that will include some level of continued building occupant complaints, and possible legal ramifications.

April 15, 2011 Attorney Judith Whitelaw wrote holding the same opinions of her April 29, 2010 letter basically that we follow the expert's recommendations.

In August 2011 the town moved into rented space at 333 Calef Highway with a lease that would provide a location for town hall office functions until 2016 (now until 2017). This building, however, has two major short comings, a lack of record storage space and no meeting rooms. The town has rented additional space for storage of records and meets in various school buildings depending on their availability. Since moving into the rented building, the town has spent well over \$200,000 in rent, with nothing permanent to show for it. In addition the town has spent over \$220,000 in studies in search of a solution.

After the defeat of the renovation in 2011, the Board of Selectmen formed a committee of interested citizens from various areas of the community that was chaired by Brian Lenzi. This group gathered information including HL Turner, Chris Dundorf on energy (CDES) and hiring the Building Science Corporation (BSC), an expert in rehabilitation of old brick buildings. BSC produced a report\* recommending some ways to rehab the building at a lower cost than HL Turner by cutting out some of the work including, among other items, the pitched roof over the existing flat roof. The committee contacted builder John Ricci who volunteered to go through the building to make suggestions and estimates. In the fall of 2012 the Committee presented their findings and recommended proceeding with a smaller scale rehabilitation of the former town offices at 137 Ramsdell Lane. This included three items\*(the committee summary, a second HL Turner report and a PowerPoint presentation). This was presented to the voters at the March 2013 meeting. The request for \$2,330,000 was defeated 614-668 (770 yes were needed)

After this defeat for the renovation, the Board went out for a request for proposal and requested the Building committee review and recommend an architect. SMP was selected by the Selectmen in the Spring of 2013. The Board of Selectmen met with the Building Committee, the architect and engaged other stake holders. At the June 15, 2013 meeting the Board voted unanimously to proceed with a proposal to build a new building rather than renovate. The board also voted to request quotes on demolition of the former town hall.

There are a number of reasons that have remained unchanged for this direction including the following: The old Town Hall has significant problems including problems with poor air quality, energy inefficiency, failure to meet standards for accessibility under Americans with Disabilities Act, and poor layout of basic supporting walls and spaces. Approximately one third of the building is space cannot be used for offices or meeting rooms because of wide halls, stairs, utility areas, etc. Related to this is the need to build an elevator into or onto the building with associated space used to access it. The fixed walls also create situations where some rooms are larger than needed for a particular office function and some smaller than needed. The mold problem is caused by moisture and poor air handling and is expensive to address and prevent.

There was nearly a one year delay in planning on a new Town Hall based upon requests that the town consider locating the building at the Svenson site. After determining that the site was not suitable for a location, the Board started planning a new building at 137 Ramsdell Lane.

The Board began the study of a new building by asking SMP to do a space needs study\* to determine the amount of space needed for each function in order to design a right-sized building. The Board reviewed various locations on the 127 Ramsdell Lane site and building options. The Board decided that the best plan would be a one-story building housing all the town hall functions and meeting rooms located in the area of the upper parking lot of the former Town Hall. There is a October 2014 PowerPoint public presentation by SMP showing the various concepts and locations considered.\* The Board decided on the upper parking lot location with a one story building for town functions and an inexpensive alternative to also build a cellar under part of the building for storage and future recreation use. The Board of Selectmen, working with SMP Architecture, developed the plans which it believed would be cost effective and better meet the needs of the Town than renting temporary space, building elsewhere in town, or renovating the former Town Hall.\*

This plan was presented to the voters at the March 2015 meeting. The \$2,350,000 proposal received a majority of votes (725-663) but failed to receive the necessary 60% (833 votes needed).

After the 2015 Town Meeting, the Board accepted the offer of a local builder to review the former town hall and various studies to see if renovation should be considered again. Fenton Groen of Groen Builders came to the Board of Selectmen meeting\* and presented the results of their findings that indicated that the oldest part of the building could not be saved at a reasonable cost and should be torn down. They investigated saving the 1950's and 1960's wing, and building a small addition. While the cost was 10-15% lower than a new building, this did not include what would be a much larger contingency for the unknown. It would also not be able to attain the energy efficiencies of a new building. Like the other renovation proposals, this one covered all the brick with foam on the outside. When asked at the Selectmen's meeting, Fenton Groen indicated if he was a tax payer in Barrington, he would vote for a new building rather than the uncertainties of renovating a portion of the old building.

The fact that Town Meeting has twice voted down renovation indicated to the Board a lack of public support for renovation of building that was never designed to be a Town Hall. New construction is the only town meeting proposal to receive majority support.

#### Benefits for new construction:

The estimated cost to build new is similar to the estimate cost to renovate given the much larger contingency that would be needed because of the much higher risk of finding additional problems during the renovation.

The renovation plans change the exterior look of the former town hall by coving the brick with foam and some siding material compared to the design for the new one.

A smaller efficient building footprint is produced by new construction.

There can be much more efficient internal arrangement of spaces in new construction.

There will be much better energy efficiency in new construction with lower operating costs

There will be better air quality, eliminating the uncertainty about mold and air quality in the old building.

The Board has concluded that the advantage of building new far outweighed any residual value offered by attempts to reuse part or all of the former Town Hall. (minutes June 15, 2015)

The Board has dealt with and considered other questions.

“Why not sell the old building, put it on the tax rolls, and build somewhere else?” The price for the former town offices would be greatly depressed by the condition of the building because anyone attempting to renovate and use the building would face the same costs and issues as the town. It was estimated the Town would receive less for the sale of the property than the value of the land without the building to the town. The site is adjacent to the Library and Recreation Departments. Frequently it is used for parking for those events. Those uses would be lost if the property were to be sold. From an economic standpoint it was felt that what could be obtained for that site would not come close to the cost of obtaining and developing another site. Four other sites have been considered by the Town. First, the Svenson family offered to donate land to the town. The town appropriated money to study the site but concluded it was not acceptable for a location to solve the community needs for a library, more recreation space and the town offices. The development costs were estimated at over \$300,000. It would have taken land off the tax rolls that could have been developed commercially. Second the town-owned lots opposite the new Turbocam building on Redemption Road, but the development costs would have been expensive and the Board determined that continuing to develop the properties on Redemption Road for commercial tax base was a better use for that site. Third, the site on Route 125 beside and behind Liberty Truck was also rejected for similar reasons. The development costs of the Route 125 site would have been much higher than Redemption Road. Finally it would cost several hundred thousand dollars to purchase the property behind Calef’s store. The purchase would have taken the land with commercial potential off the tax rolls. There were also access issues with the Calef site that concerned both the Police Chief and Fire Chief. In contrast, the former Town

Hall site on Ramsdell lane is centrally located, ready for development, adjacent to other town uses, and was determined by the Board to be the most practical and financially sound location.

“Why not buy the property at 333 Calef Highway that is currently being rented?” The Town has looked at purchasing the building at 333 Calef Highway, but there is too little land area for adding record storage and meeting rooms and to provide the parking necessary for that expanded use. While the Town could consider eminent domain to take additional land from abutters, that was not something the Board felt comfortable doing. Even if an arrangement could be made to purchase additional land, the difficulties expanding this to meet the needs for record storage, meeting rooms and adequate parking raised the price above what the Board felt it was worth. The location on Route 125 creates risk for those entering and exiting a 50 mph heavily traveled highway

“Why tear the building down at this time?” The Board of Selectmen is proactively planning for development of the former Town Hall site as a campus for governmental activity. This includes the needs of the Recreation Department, the Library and Town functions. The voters approved money to demolish the former town hall this year as well as funds to study the development of a future library. The latter cannot proceed without certainty about a location, currently planned to be within a few feet of the site of the former town hall. It was made clear at the Budget meetings and at the Town Meeting Deliberative session that demolishing the building was to occur in 2015. The Board has the authority and funding to proceed. In fact if the Board does not proceed, these funds expire at the end of 2015. A new appropriation would be needed to proceed. The tentatively planned location of the septic system for the new building (and the library) require test pits within the footprint of the former Town Hall, so the building must be removed before that testing can occur.

In summary:

Why did the Board decide the best option is to build a new town Hall? (1) The old one is uninhabitable. The town moved out of the former Town Hall 4 years ago because many experts recommended the building could not be used because of unsafe conditions. The repairs needed to move back into the former Town Hall are very expensive and have twice been decisively voted down at Town Meeting. Even if the town spent the millions of dollars in renovation, there would have been no guarantee the problems were corrected. (2) The town is currently renting temporary space in an office building that is costly, lacks adequate space for meetings, parking and record storage. The lease is set to expire in August, 2017. If a building is to be built before the lease expires approval will be needed at the March 2016 Town Meeting. (3) The proposed building, located on the lot of the former Town Hall, is the best alternative for the needs of Barrington. It will be energy efficient, designed to meet the space needs of the town with modern technology, and provide meeting spaces for the community. It will be a building in which the residents of Barrington can take pride.

\*study and minutes are posted on-line

Expenditures on studies:

Does not include repair, drainage redesign, drainage work, furnace, asbestos					
	2005-2007	Team Design	space needs, ADA, etc.		\$ 23,259
	2010	EnviroVantage	Air testing		\$ 2,900
	2010-2014	Lawson Group	Air testing		\$ 20,988
	2007-2010	Desmaris Environmental	Air testing		\$ 5,864
	2010-2012	HL Turner	Architect Engineer		\$ 43,782
	2011	Building Science Corp.	Specialist renovate old brick		\$ 5,820
	2014-2015	SMP Architects	Architect		\$ 105,277
	2015	BPS	Construction Manager		\$ 1,500
	2015	Dubois & King	Civil Engineering		\$ 13,650
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$ 223,039</b>